

Dreyfuss & Son Store  
Main & Ervay Sts.  
Dallas  
Dallas County  
Texas

HABS No. TX- 3125

HABS  
TEX  
57-DAL,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
TEX  
S-261

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DREYFUSS AND SON STORE

HABS No. TX-3125

Main & Ervay Sts.

Dallas, Texas

PROJECT STATEMENT

The documentation of the Dreyfuss & Son Store in Dallas, Texas was undertaken by Cadillac Fairview Urban Development through RTKL Associates Inc. for the City of Dallas and the Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Conservation & Recreation Service's (HCRS) National Architectural and Engineering Record (HAER). RTKL project members included Joseph Scalabrin, Principal in Charge, Orin M. Bullock, Historical Consultant, Eric deNeve, Project Architect, and Tom McLean.

The structure was recorded during the spring of 1982.

HISTORY

The store was built for the Dallas mercantile establishment of Dreyfuss & Son by the Woolford Investment Company. It is not clear what the exact relationship was with the Woolford Investment Company, however, a congratulatory advertisement by Neiman-Marcus Company mentioned that "Woolfe Bros. of Kansas City" is its parent organization.

Mr. Girard Dreyfuss, the Owner of the business was born in Alsace-Lorraine in 1853 and traveled to New York in 1871 and on to Shreveport, Louisiana where a cousin offered him his first retail job in a small general store. His search for fortune brought him back to New York, on to Richmond, Virginia, Council Bluffs, Iowa, Leadville, Colorado, back to Shreveport, and in about 1880 he came to Dallas, Texas. He opened a men's furnishing store in partnership with A. K. Hurst, opposite the St. George Hotel on Main Street. This partnership lasted about 31 years and in 1911 Girard struck out for himself and established a men's merchandise store at the corner of Murphy and Main Street with his son, Sol. The grand opening was on August 3, 1911.

Girard and Sol Dreyfuss apparently had two stores when, in 1929, they decided to have the Woolford Investment Company build a new third store for them. The new store would be the most "modern" in the Southwest and employ the "latest and ultimate" merchandising techniques. Girard and Sol expected the new location to become the center of Dallas' activities. Before they could build on the corner of Ervay and Main Street, they had to demolish an existing building.

The Middleton Brothers Building had been built on that corner in 1895. Its exuberant, eclectic style was a direct reflection of the growing wealth and boomtown spirit of Dallas, which by 1890 was the largest metropolitan area in Texas. The Middleton Brothers Building survived the financial panic of 1893 but fell to the Great Depression of 1929 when it was demolished for the Dreyfuss & Son building.

The new building was completed in early 1930 with a grand opening on Monday, May 5, 1930. The opening was announced with large layouts in "The Dallas Morning News" along with many congratulatory layouts by local retailers and construction companies. There were several articles in the paper giving historical accounts and architectural descriptions. WFAA radio broadcasted the announcement of the opening at 7:45 P.M. on Sunday, May 4, 1930. The architect was Alonzo H. Gentry, A.I.A. from Kansas City, Missouri with the Dallas firm of Lang & Witchell as associate architects. The consulting engineer was Erwin Pfuhl and the electrical engineers were Henrici-Lowry Engineering Company from Kansas City. Bellows-Maclay Construction Company from Dallas were the general contractors, while the limestone exterior was supplied by the Herget Cut Stone Company of Dallas.

It seems that Girard left the management of the new store to Sol Dreyfuss who, incidentally, became the new owner of the Dallas Baseball Club at about the time of the opening. The new store expanded its merchandising to include more ladies' fashion.

An original blueprint architectural construction set was available with most pages still included. These were photographically reproduced and inserted into the H.A.B.S. standard format. The drawings, plus the following description of the building, provide an accurate record of the physical structure.

"The Dallas Morning News" account describes the six story building in the following words:

'Executed with feeling and understanding of the modern thought in form and line, the new Dreyfuss & Son Building which is opened formally to its public Monday evening rises as a monument of the inspiration of the indigenous. In the heart of the city which is to Dreyfuss "the new center of Dallas activities" the six story building offers an interesting contrast to the old Federal Building and Postoffice which stands immediately opposite it on Main and Ervay streets.

Against the Dallas skyline the brown stone of the postoffice presents a rather smudgy appearance. Its old towers are something for the etcher's notebook who would preserve yesterdays of Dallas. Its ornament is ornate; its windows are deep set; its marble halls offically forbidding.

Against that same skyline the gray stone of the Dreyfuss home is like a fresh-hewn prize from some quarry where beauty lies waiting only the master's hand to form it into arrested song. Straight and simple is its flight into the high halls of the atmosphere, a flight made higher by the artistry of suggestion. In the structure the artists have converted an alien spirit of modernism into something expressive of the very soil on which it stands.'

The writer obviously had a flair for words, yet it does describe its simple contrast to the older existing Dallas architecture.

The exterior can be described as an adaptation of classical empire executed in Texas natural limestone. The exterior walls (on Main and Ervay Street) are decorated with fluted stone pilasters with carved stone capitals and bases. Between the capitals are carved stone panels. The spandrel panels between the third and fourth floors are of soft green terra cotta in a matte rough glazed finish. These are decorated with various insignias of the cloth weavers' guild of Egypt. A ram's head in the octagonal central motif is the insignia of the cloth weavers' guild of Bruges, Belgium. Other terra cotta ornaments include a wide decorative molding at the roof parapet and a small band several feet below. Crowning the parapet are 10 large terra cotta urns containing fruit and vegetable products symbolic of the productiveness of Texas. The terra cotta bands and urns are a warm reddish brown smooth glaze.

The ground level facade is a combination of several materials. The major face seems to be a Texas pink pearl granite from Marble Falls, Texas. The plate glass storefront windows are set into a brass mullion system. The two entries consist of brass doors set into steel frames with cast iron ornamentation and a dark reddish brown polished marble. Above the storefront and at the second floor line is a continuous cast iron ornamental band. This cast iron band also forms the face of two projecting canopies that provide protection for the entries. Originally the canopies contained additional cast iron ornamental heads and special lighting. Steel rods with cast iron ornamentation support the canopies from the building face. Below the iron band and over the glass storefront display windows are recessed crank operated awnings.

The structure is steel frame with cast in place concrete floors. There are two passenger and one freight elevator on the north side of the building. There are also two dumb waiters. The building was designed with 5 full upper floors, a partial mezzanine level and a full basement that extends under the Main Street sidewalk. The roof contained an elevator penthouse, and a separate mechanical room. A cooling tower was added later. It had a 73'-2" frontage on Main Street and a 100'-0" frontage on Ervay Street. The property line is actually 75' x 100'. The grand opening accounts describe the interior, the manner it was merchandised, and the quality of the finishes. By the accounts and the detail construction drawings, the interior was well finished with high quality materials and details, many of which have been removed over the years. Of primary interest was the mezzanine overlooking the main floor. This was a 29' x 65' opening with a continuously decorated iron balustrade with a walnut handrail. Below that was a continuous plaster band with fluting and decorative emblems; below this was a plaster cornice that was typically found at all ceilings except the 5th and basement floors. The mezzanine opening was restructured and sometime after 1970, filled in to make a complete floor.

The most interesting interior element still existing is a decorative circular open-welled staircase that starts at the basement and continues to the mezzanine floor. The balustrade base or stringer is of a reddish brown polished marble and forms a sweeping unsupported curve. Again the decorative iron balustrade and a walnut handrail is used. The stair treads and risers are white travertine, as are the landings. Overall, the stair is very gracefull and well crafted. Above, it becomes a standard rectangular run, open staircase.

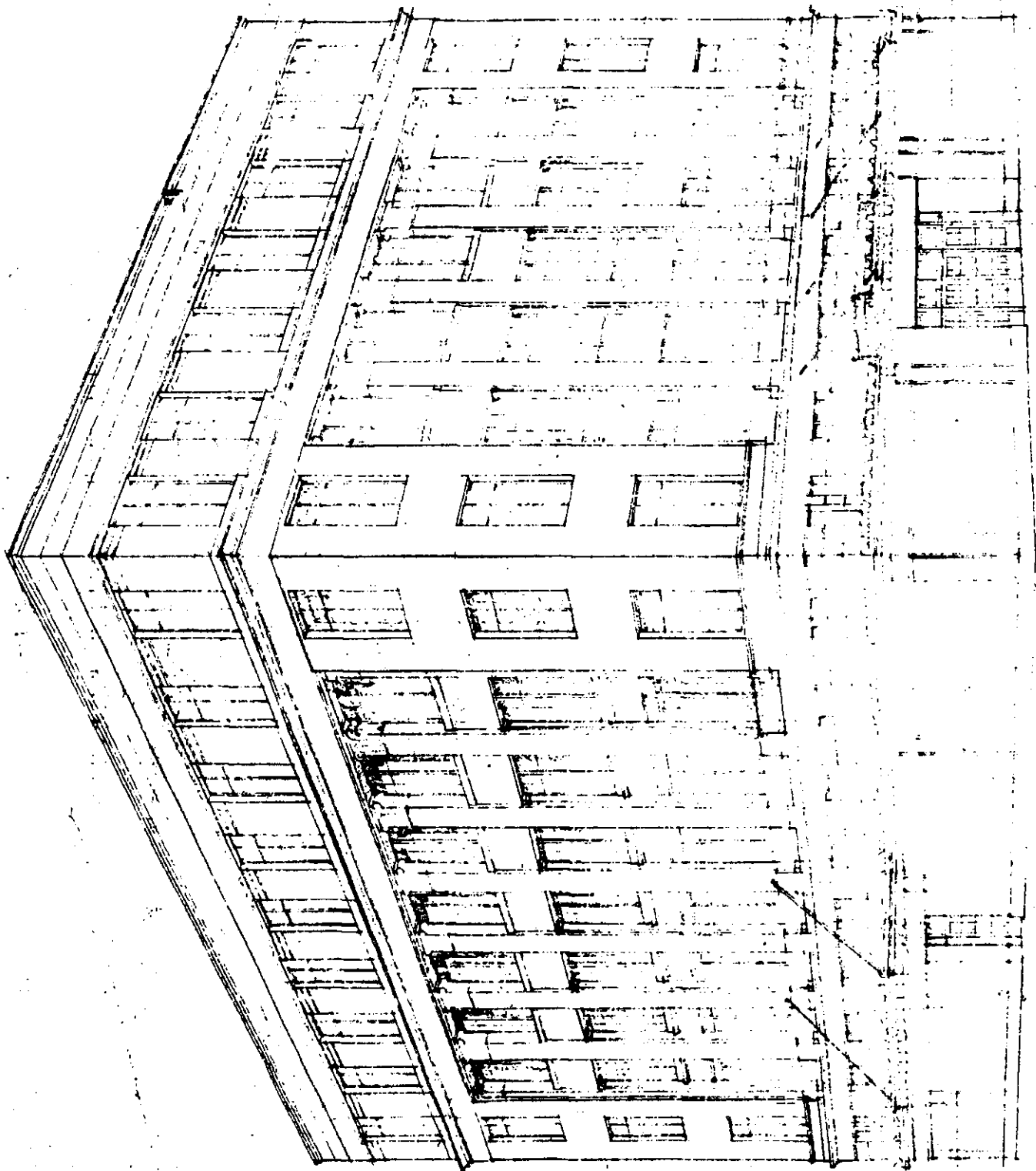
The ground floor finishes include white 12" x 24" imported travertine set into a herringbone pattern. Behind the counters they placed cork tile. Some of the cabinetwork on the sales floor, at the walls, and in the show windows, are still original and shows a wide variety of wood and decorative detailing. None of the original light fixtures are evident. The majority of all the columns in the building contained a decorative plaster capital, most of which have been removed or are covered with a lowered ceiling.

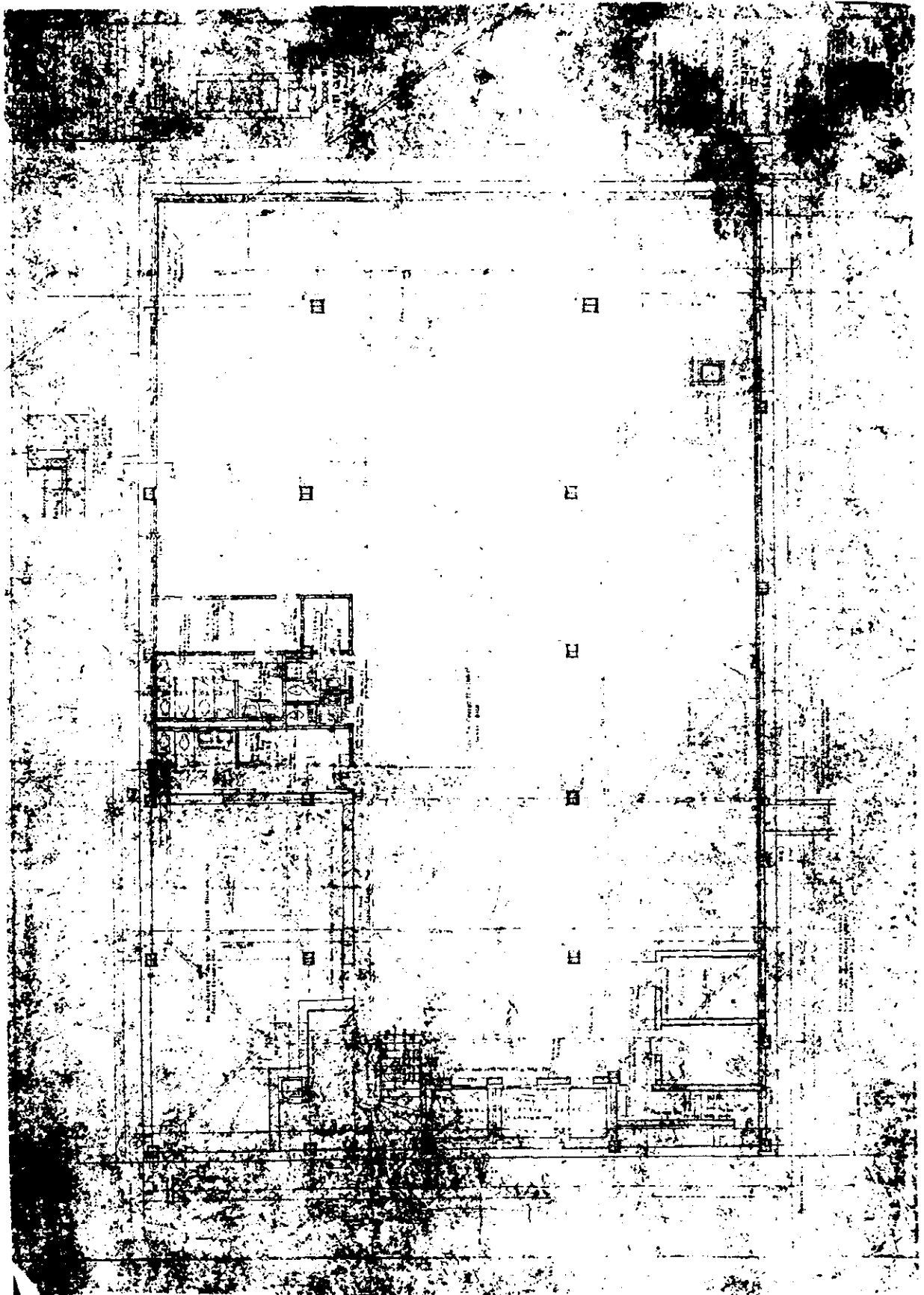
Very little of the remaining floors contain the original cabinetwork with the exception of the 2nd floor that still has some of the nicely detailed original wall display cabinets and panels. The fifth floor contained the store offices, then and now.

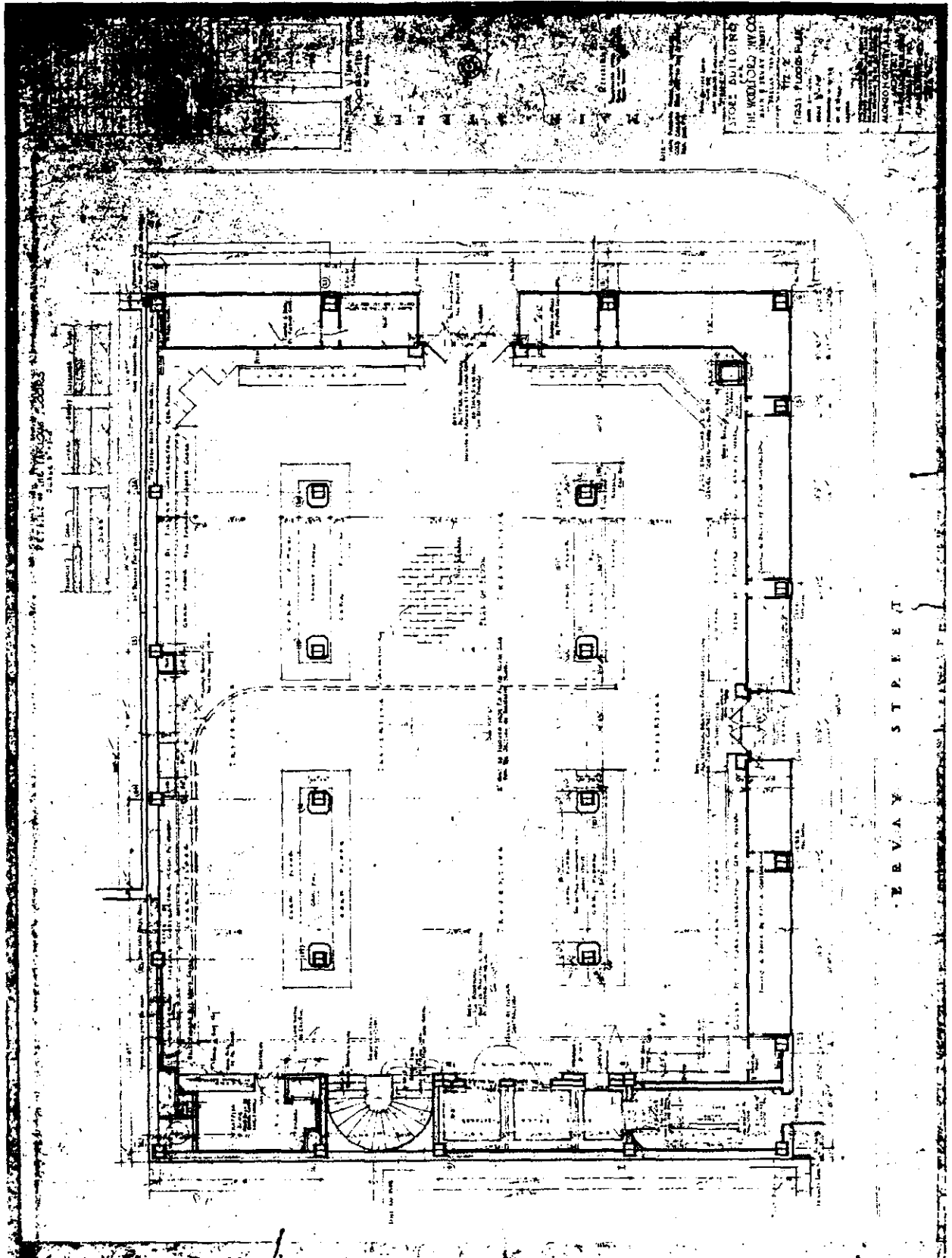
Most of the buildings' restrooms contain the original fixturing and finishes. The elevators were renovated at a later date and unfortunately the original doors, trim, and controls were removed. The drawings and accounts describe the elevator doors to be decorative wood with a cast bronze classical figure in the center of the 4 door panels of the two elevators. All of the steel framed casement windows had a wide cream colored marble sill.

Overall, the Oreyfuss & Son building appears to be quite restrained and conservative, however, closer examination shows that the quality of materials and simple detailing makes it a significant example of classical adaption in Dallas Architecture.

Note: The originals for the following reduced photocopies of drawings can be found in Lot #

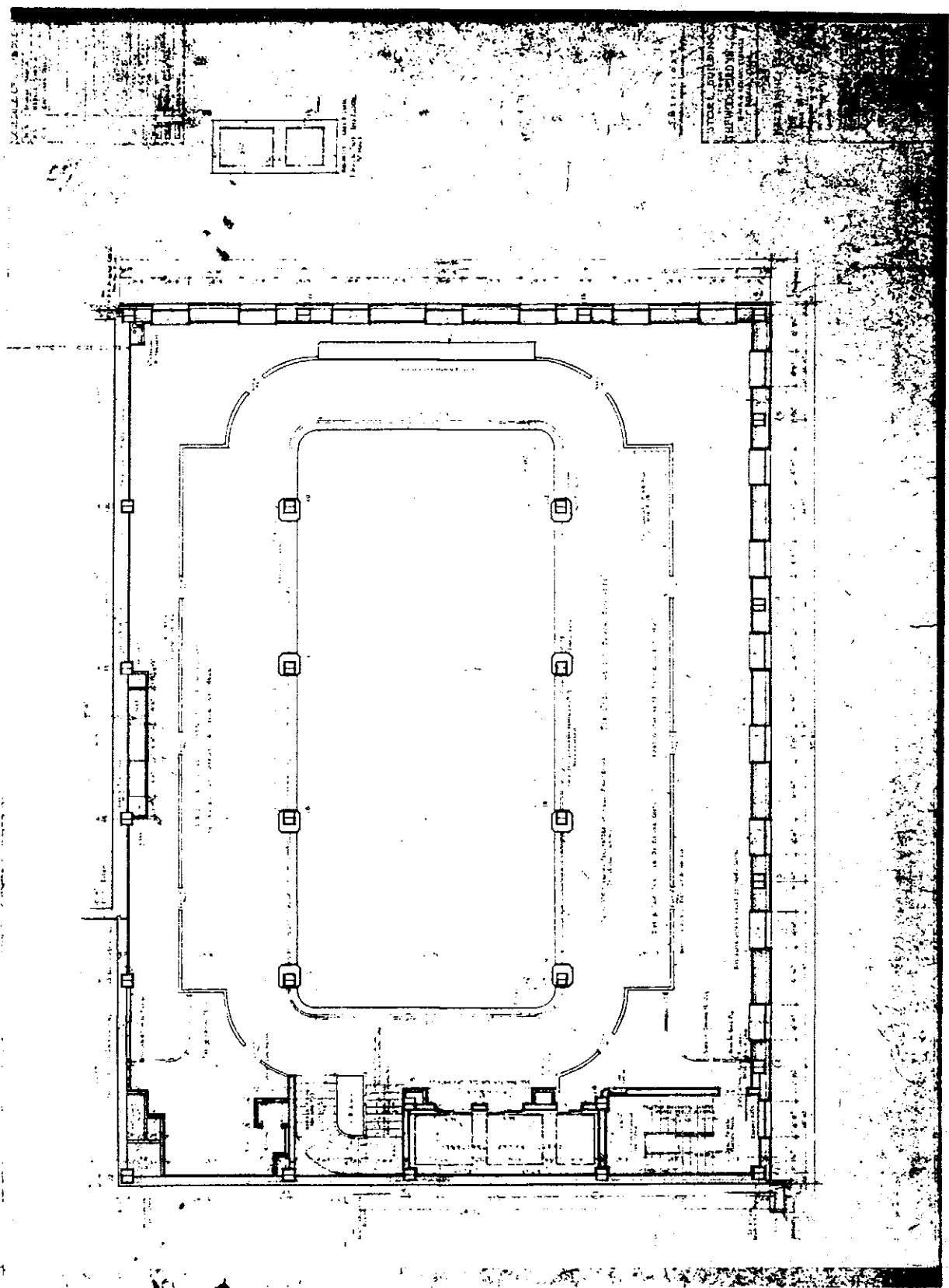


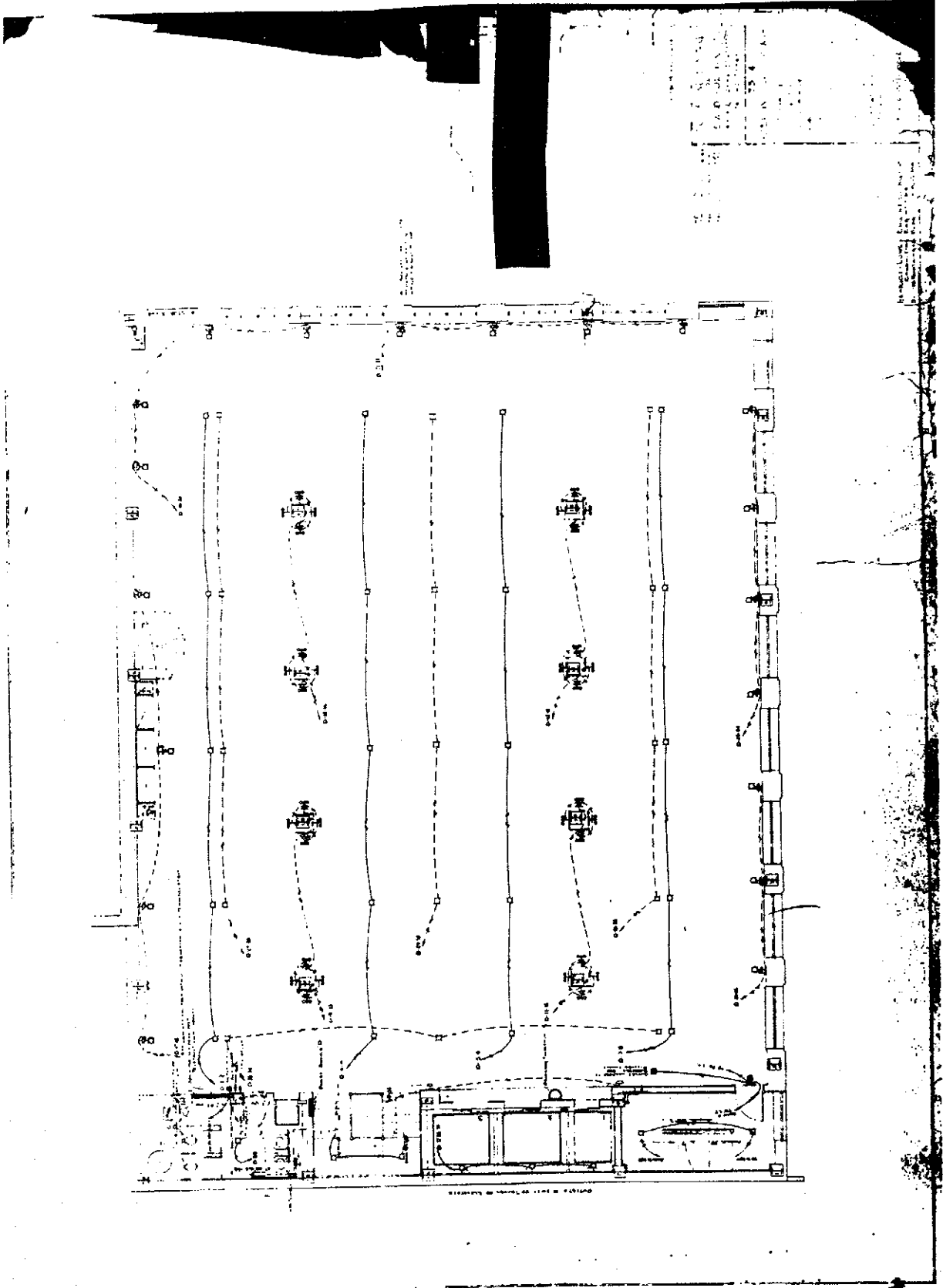


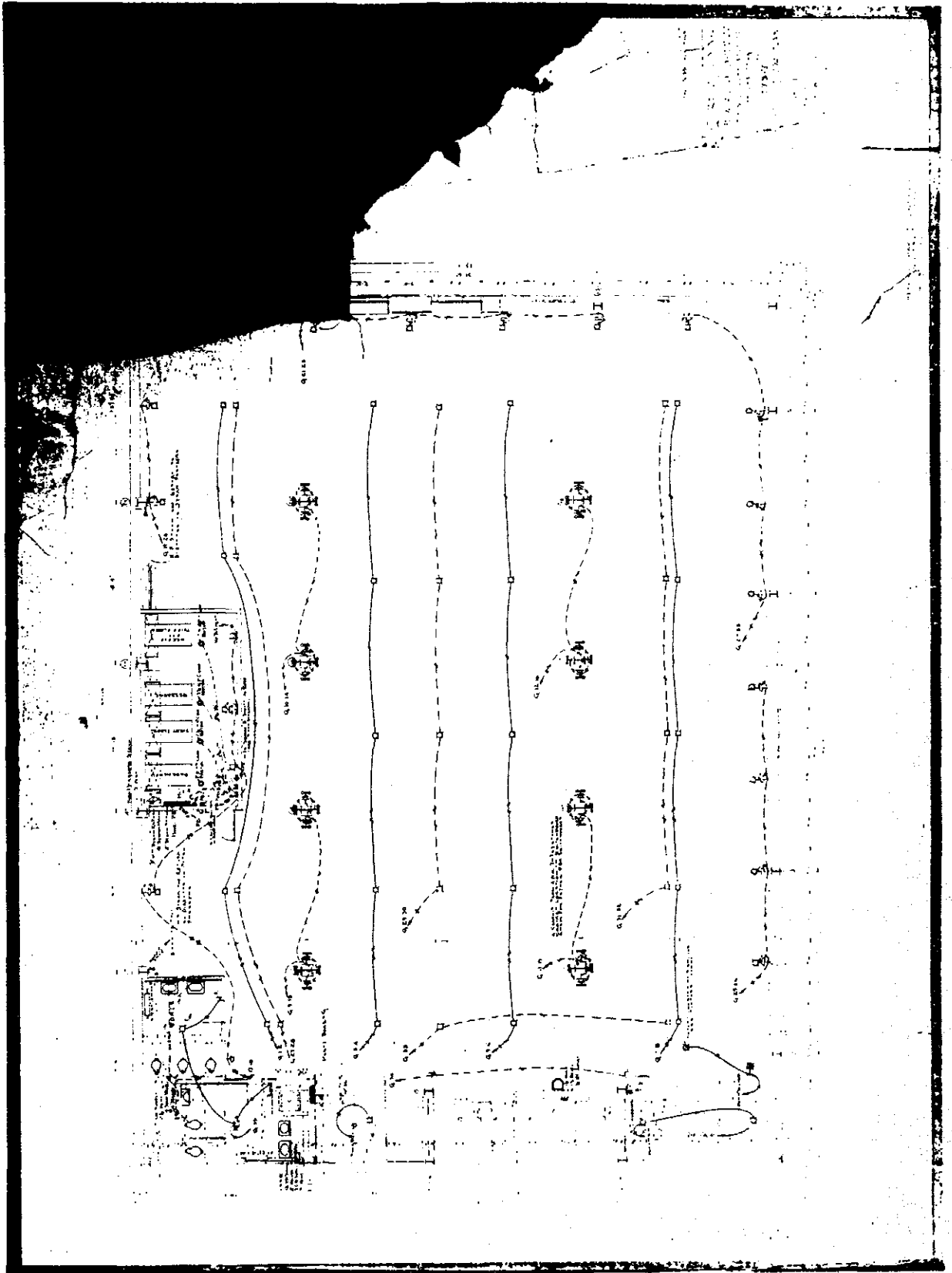


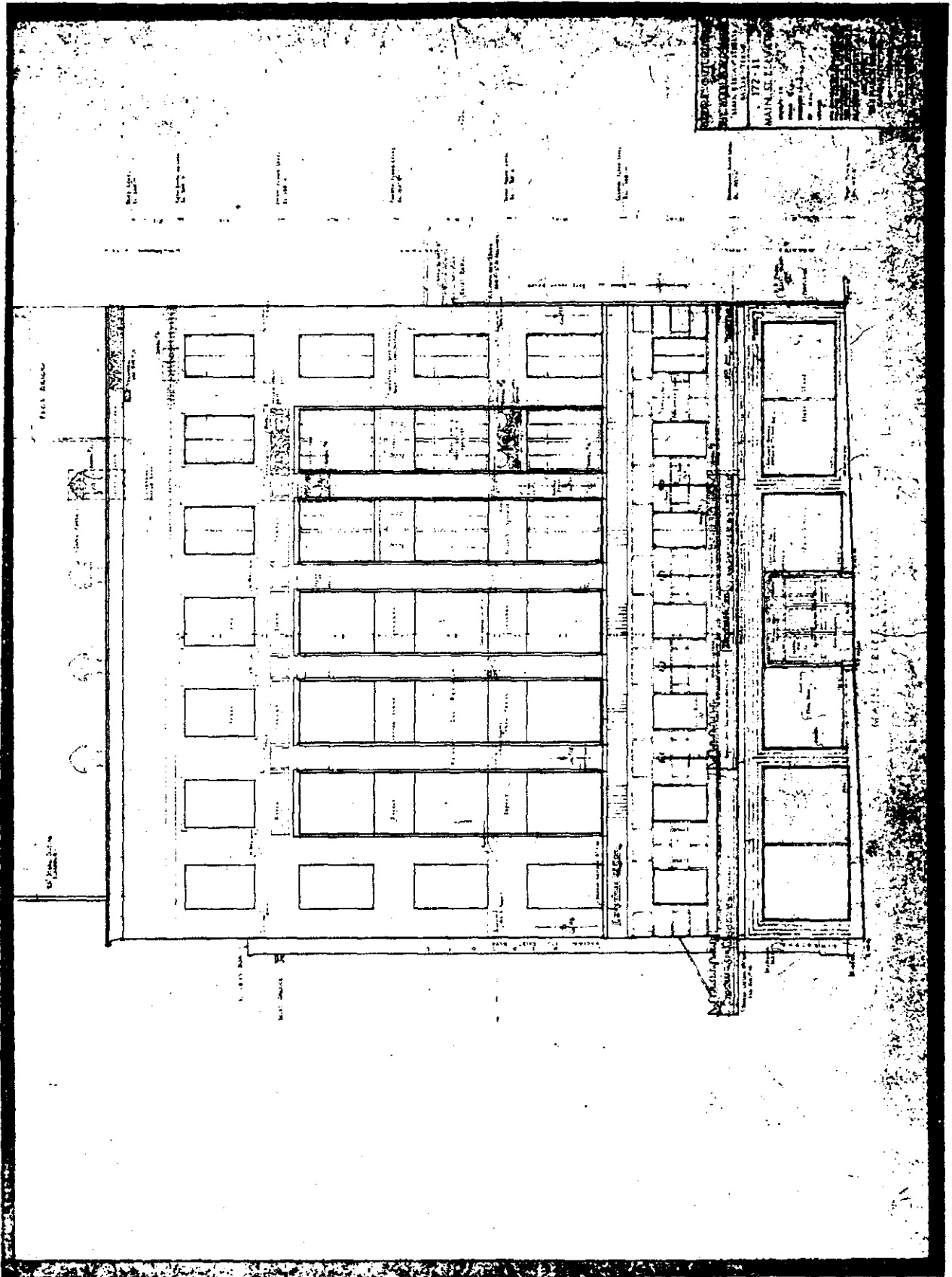
## First Floor Plan

0	5	15
0	5	15

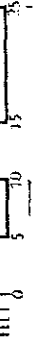


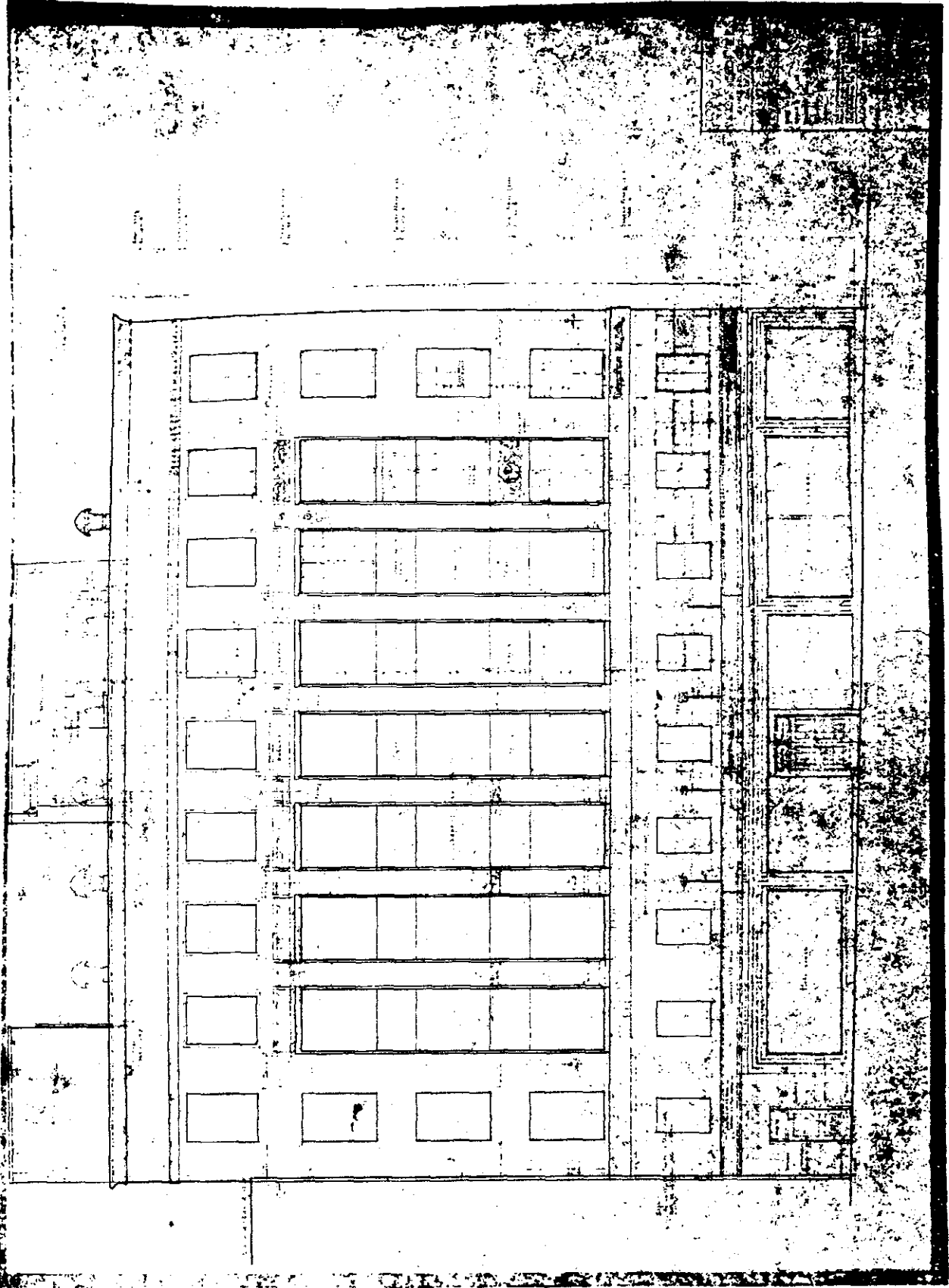




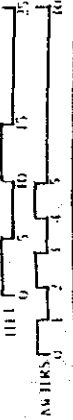


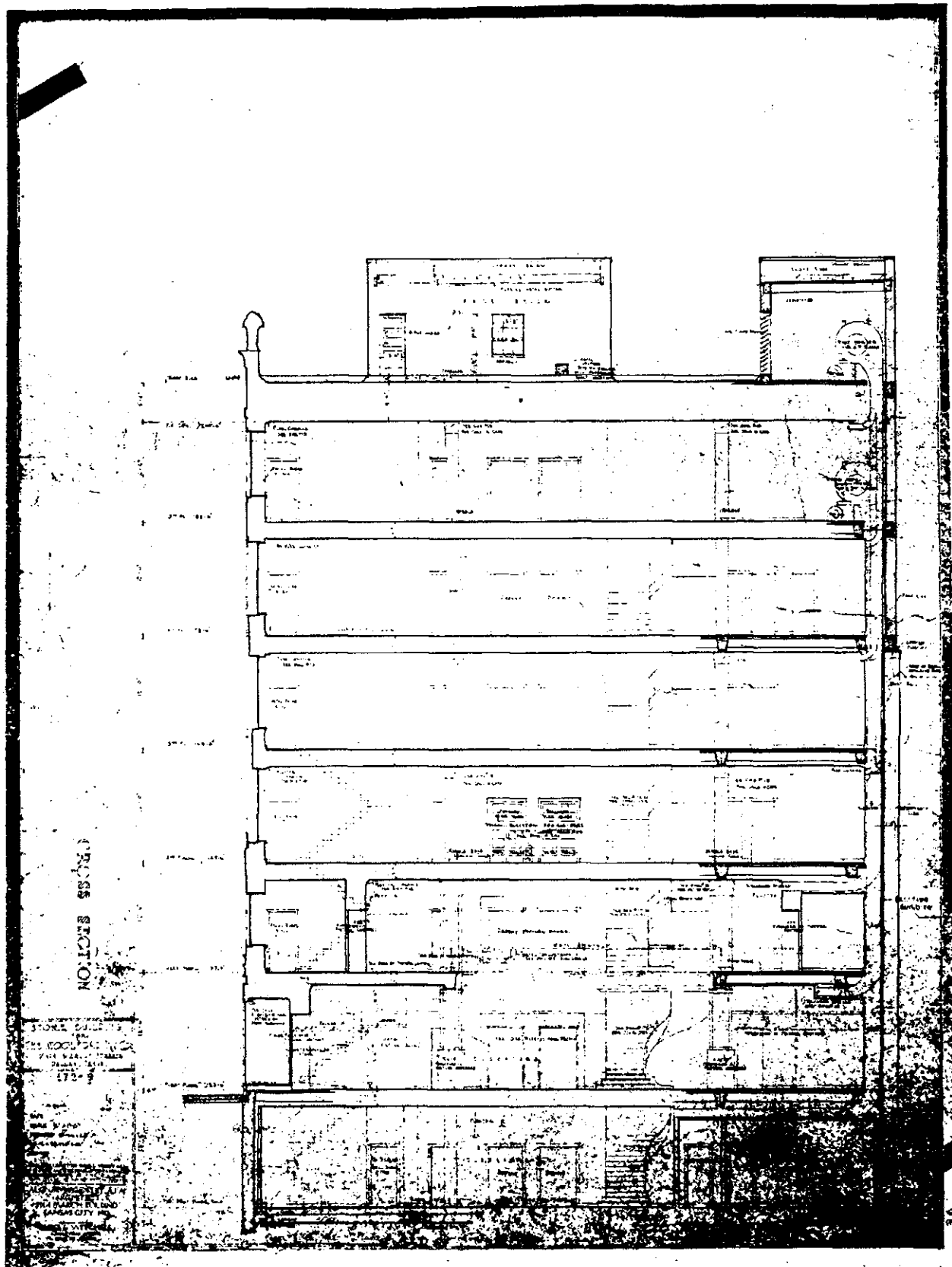
South Elevation





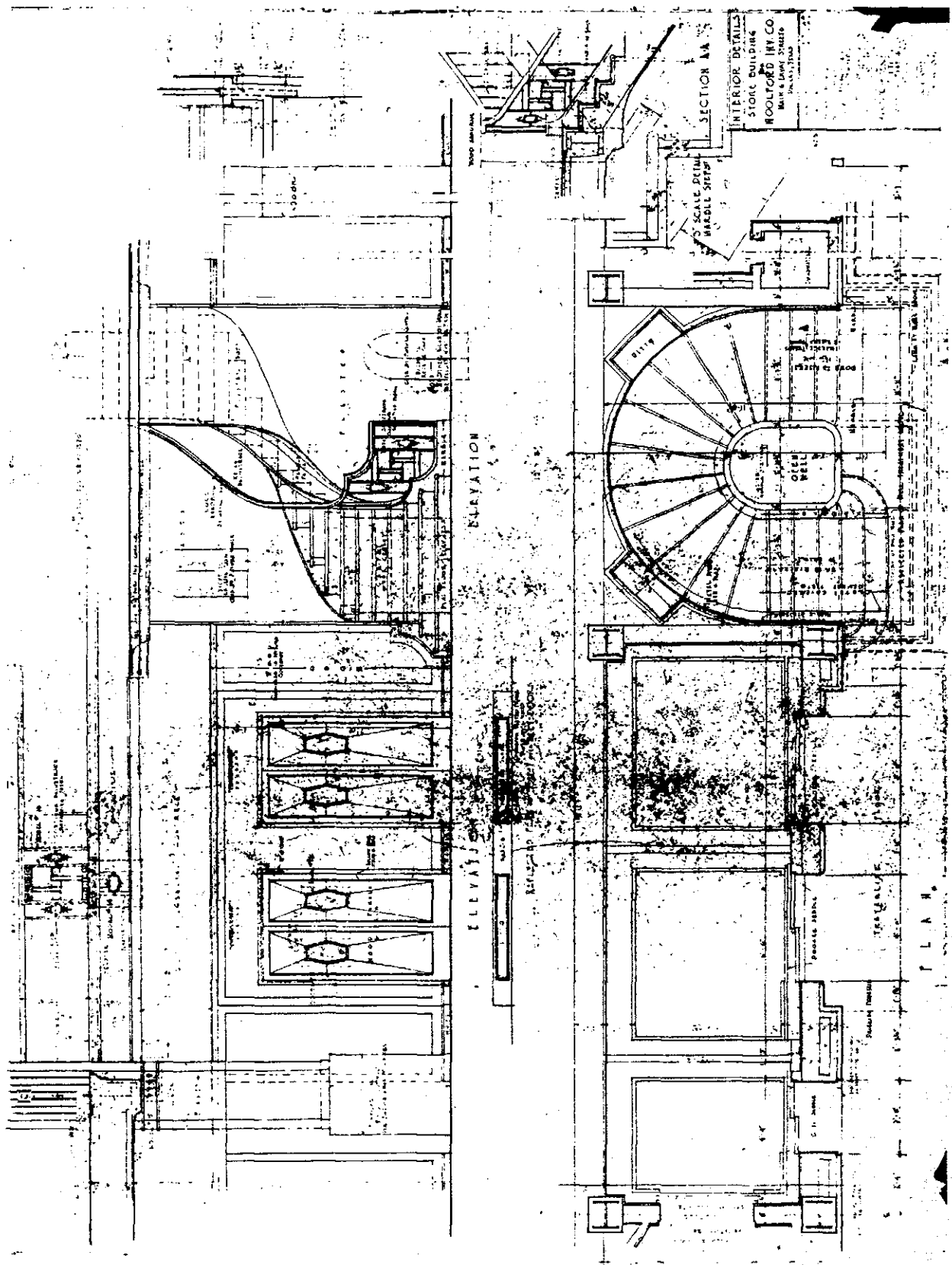
West Elevation



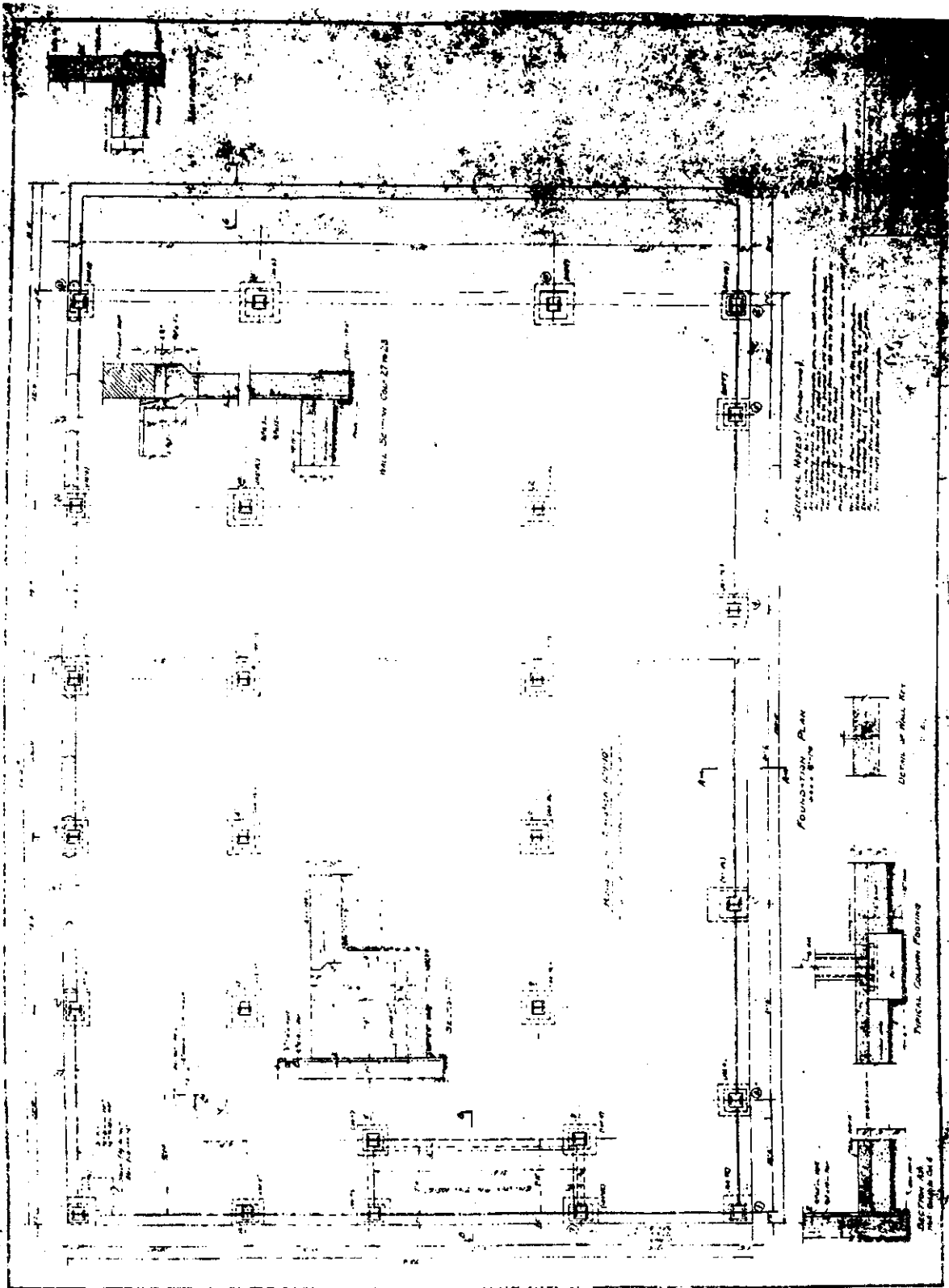
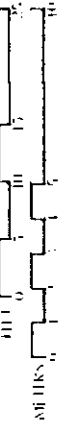
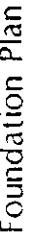


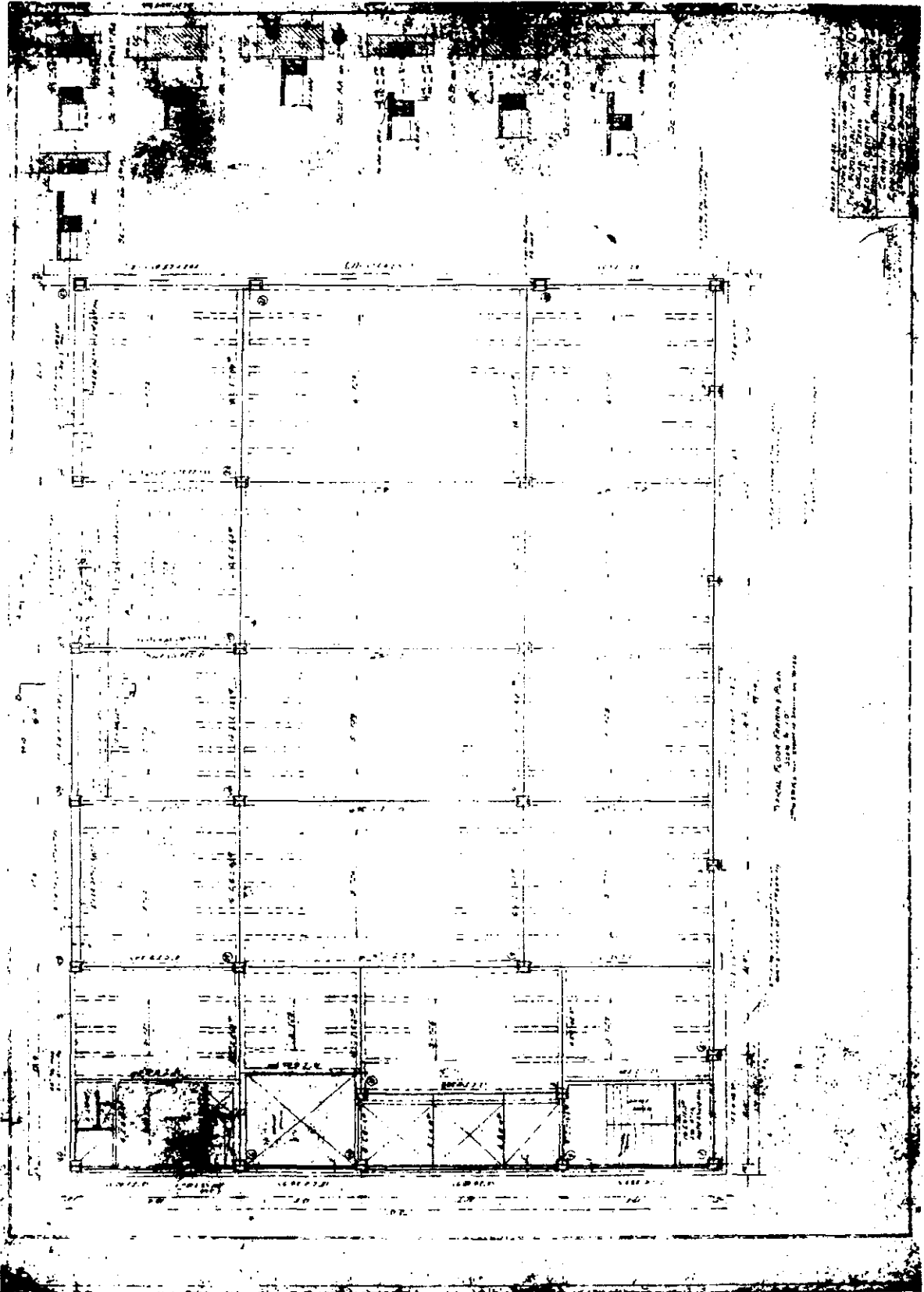
Building Cross Section

CROSS SECTION



Interior Details





Typical Framing Plan